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performing a control process for deviating a timing when a first output channel is selected as a channel for outputting a signal input from a first input channel from among the plurality of node devices, based on the predetermined information communicated in the communication process.

52. A control method for a node device which communicates using a plurality of input channels and a plurality of output channels and which changes an output channel for outputting a signal input from each of said input channels in accordance with a predetermined pattern, the method comprising the steps of:

performing a communication process for communicating predetermined information with another node device; and

performing a control process to deviate a timing when a first output channel is selected as a channel for outputting a signal input from a first input channel from said another node device, based on the predetermined information communicated in the communication process.

#### REMARKS

This application has been carefully reviewed in light of the Office Action dated July 23, 2001. Claims 41 to 52 are now pending in the application with Claims 1 to 40 having been cancelled. Claims 41, 46, 51 and 52 are the independent claims herein. Reconsideration and further examination are respectfully requested.

Applicants wish to thank the Examiner for the indication that Claims 8 to

10, 18 to 20, 28 to 30 and 38 to 40 would be allowable if rewritten into independent form.

In this regard, subject matter substantially corresponding to that of Claims 8, 18, 28 and 38 has been incorporated into each of newly-added independent Claims 41, 46, 51 and 52.

Claims 1, 3 and 4 were objected to for informalities which Applicants submit are obviated by the cancellation of Claims 1 to 40.

Claims 1 to 40 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, which Applicants submit is obviated by the cancellation of Claims 1 to 40.

Claims 1 to 7, 11 to 17, 21 to 27 and 31 to 37 were rejected under the judicially created doctrine of obviousness-type double patenting over Claims 1 to 66 of U.S. Patent 5,859,718 (Yamamoto), and were also rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as allegedly being anticipated by Yamamoto. Applicants submit that the rejections are obviated by the cancellation of Claims 1 to 40, but nonetheless submit that newly-added Claims 41 to 52 are allowable over Yamamoto since Claims 41, 46, 51 and 52 include subject matter substantially corresponding to that of Claims 8, 18, 28 and 38. Accordingly, in light of the indicated allowability of Claims 8, 18, 28 and 38, it is believed that all of newly-added Claims 41 to 52 are allowable.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, the entire application is believed to be in condition for allowance and such action is respectfully requested at the Examiner's earliest convenience.